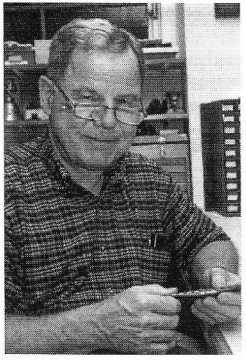
Robert Hamm Earns MMR 332



For Robert Hamm, the trains started early during stroller trips with his Mom to the station followed several years later by a Marx train set. However, nothing really got started until he happened to browse through a copy of *Railroad Model Craftsman* as a young teenager. Little did he know the fun he was to have over the next 42 years.

After graduating from engineering school and marrying his wife, Pat, in 1968, he joined a club in Hornell, NY, and attended an NFR convention in Niagara Falls. He did clinics, layouts but most of all he remembers the great models in the contest and being inspired by Dave Roberts, the contest chairman. During the next several years he entered and took a handful of awards at several NFR conventions.

His early modeling was in HO and comprised the usual mix of road names, equipment types and eras; however, his preference soon turned to small equipment and grass roots operations.

By 1973 that evolved into HOn3 and the mythical Iron Gorge and Western RR was established. In 1974 they relocated to eastern New York and moved into a new house, and over the next twenty-five years his dream layout evolved with Pat's great support and encouragement. A round robin group was formed and continues to meet weekly to this day.

His participation in the NMRA focused in on the division level, and between the mid 1980s and 1990s he became active in and served as an officer in the Hudson-Berkshire Division. In 1996 while attending a NER convention Bob uttered those fateful words, "Sure, I'll chair an NER convention."

Well it was a lot of work by a lot of people, but gratifying. They did another one in 2001. "I guess some people are slow learners. I am now serving a second term as a region director for the NER and model contest chairman, and in both cases I am pleased for the opportunity, particularly the latter since I feel that is how I got my start in the program, and now it is time for me to inspire and encourage newer, less experienced modelers," he said.

While Bob had been thinking about the Achievement Program for a long time it wasn't until the mid 1990s when a division support group formed that he got serious about it, and by 2000 he had received four certificates. By the fall of 2002 the number had grown to eight. He completed the ninth and last category—Cars—by completing and receiving a merit award on a model he had started in the early 1970s just before the move.

In 2000 the Hamms built a new house, or as his wife put it, tongue firmly in cheek, "an adequate house over a great basement (1,600 square feet, finished). He moved the best parts of the old layout and he is ready to embark on the next chapter of his narrow-gauge empire as he approaches retirement.

Bob is a mechanical engineer and has a great job at a high-tech fuel cell company. Pat and Bob have two grown daughters and a brand new grandson and live in Saratoga Springs, NY. He holds Achievement Certificates in Cars, Structures, Scenery, Civil and Electrical Engineering, Chief Dispatcher, Association Volunteer and Official and Author.

"I guess I would sum up my philosophy about our wonderful pastime by saying, it's a great hobby filled with a rich diversity of art, crafts, creativity, research and other train related pursuits, but the greatest part is sharing the fun we have among friends, new and old. It's a combination that just can't be beat," he said.